

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 00342 281839Z

47

ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDEV PINT BF

SUBJ: NO-CONFIDENCE MOVE LOSES

SUMMARY: OPPOSITION FREE NATIONAL MOVEMENT (FNM) INTRODUCED NO-CONFIDENCE RESOLUTION FEBRUARY 26 IN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. RESOLUTION WAS DESIGNED TO ATTRACT SOME SUPPORT AMONG RESTIVE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY (PLP) BACK-BENCHERS BUT FAILED TO DO SO. DEBATE WAS LACK-LUSTER AND UNFOCUSSED AND NO-CONFIDENCE MOVE WAS DEFEATED IN SURPRISE VOTE WHICH TOOK PLACE BEFORE MOST MEMBERS SPOKE ON RESOLUTION, PRO OR CON. VOTE WAS EIGHT FOR MOTION, 15 AGAINST, 13 MEMBERS BEING ENGAGED IN DRINKING COFFEE IN SMOKING ROOM WHEN VOTE WAS TAKEN. SOME ABSENCES ON GOVERNMENT SIDE MAY HAVE BEEN DELIBERATE, AND TENOR OF DEBATE DID NOT SUGGEST THAT DEFEAT OF NO-CONFIDENCE RESOLUTION CONSTITUTED POSITIVE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. FINAL RESULT WAS THEREFORE INCONCLUSIVE. END SUMMARY

1. FNM NO-CONFIDENCE RESOLUTION WAS LEGAL DOCUMENT CATALOGUEING WHAT OPPOSITION CONSIDERED SERIES OF EVENTS SHOWING PLP LOSS OF IDEALISM, NEGLECT OF MAN IN STREET, CORRUPTION AND INEFFICIENCY. SOME ITEMS, E.G. GOVERNMENT NEGLECT OF JUMBAY VILLAGE PROJECT, WERE OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED TO GARNER SUPPORT FROM DISSATISFIED PLP BACK-BENCHERS, IN THIS CASE ED MOXEY WHO HAS PUBLICLY TAKEN HIS GOVERNMENT LEADERS TO TASK ON ISSUE, BUT TACTIC DID NOT WORK. PLP MINIONS MADE CLEAR THEIR PREFERENCE FOR FIGHTING GOVERNMENT FROM WITHIN

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PAGE 02 NASSAU 00342 281839Z

PARTY RATHER THAN THROUGH ALLIANCE, HOWEVER BRIEF AND OPPOR-

TUNISTIC, WITH FNM.

2. OPPOSITION LEADER KENDAL ISAACS MADE CHARACTERISTICLY
DIFFUSE AND INEFFECTIVE PRESENTATION OF FNM ATTACK. STRENGTH
OF CASE WAS NOT AUGMENTED BY RAMBLING, HALF-HEARTED SECONDING
SPEECH BY AGED SIR ROLAND SYMONETTE. BOTH WERE HECKLED BY
PLP FRONT-BENCHERS LED BY ARTHUR HANNA. HANNA, IN MAKING

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE, APPEARED TO CONCEDE THAT PM PINDLING
(ABSENT DURING MOST OF DEBATE) DID HAVE CRITICS WITHIN
PARTY, BUT POURED ICE WATER ON RUMORS THAT PINDLING WAS
THINKING OF RESIGNING OR THAT AN EARLY GENERAL ELECTION WAS
CONTEMPLATED. HIS DEFENSE OF GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, WAS LITTLE
STRONGER THAN ISAACS' ATTACK, AND WAS BASED ON THEMES THAT
"YOU NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD" AND THAT PACE OF PLP-LED "QUIET
REVOLUTION HAD BEEN SO SWIFT THAT MANY PERSONS FORGOT HOW FAR
BLACK MAJORITY HAD COME SINCE 1967.

3. POTENTIAL PLP DISSIDENTS ON BACK-BENCHES, SUCH AS OSCAR
JOHNSON, CARL FRANCIS AND MOXEY, OFTEN LAUGHED DERISIVELY
AT FNM PRESENTATION AND APPEARED BORED WHILE LISTENING TO
GOVERNMENT DEFENSE. MEMBERS WANDERED IN AND OUT OF SMOKING ROOM,
FROM WHICH LOUD AND USUALLY HILARIOUS GAIETY COULD BE HEARD
IN ASSEMBLY CHAMBER. PINDLING TOOK HIS SEAT AS HANNA COM-
PLETED HIS DEFENSE, A MOVE WHICH SEEMED PREARRANGED TO SIGNAL
THAT GOVERNMENT FRONT BENCH WISHED TO CUT OFF DEBATE ALTHOUGH
IT SEEMED THAT FNM, IF NOT OTHERS IN CHAMBER, WISHED TO
DISCUSS NO-CONFIDENCE RESOLUTION FURTHER, QUICK CALL FOR
VOTE APPEARED TO CATCH OPPOSITION OFF GUARD, AND NO FURTHER
INTERGENERS MANAGED TO CATCH THE DEPUTY SPEAKER'S EYE BEFORE
HE PROCEEDED TO THE VOTE. THERE WERE NOT OBJECTIONS TO
TIMING OF VOTE, HOWEVER. QUICK VOTE CAUGHT MANY MEMBERS IN
SMOKING ROOM.

4. COMMENT: SMALL SIZE OF VOTE ON GOVERNMENT SIDE, DESPITE
FACT THAT OUTCOME WAS NEVER IN DOUBT, MAY SUGGEST THAT SOME
OF THOSE UNHAPPY WITH PLP LEADERSHIP DELIBERATELY ABSENTED
THEMSELVES DURING VOTING. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN CASE, BUT
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PAGE 03 NASSAU 00342 281839Z

TIMING MADE SUCH GESTURES IF INTENDED, LESS THAN CLEAR-CUT.
FRANCIS'S OPINION AS STATED TO POLOFF THAT TIME IS NOT RIPE
FOR PUBLIC CHALLENGES TO PINDLING'S LEADERSHIP MAY WELL BE AN
ACCURATE REFLECTION OF GENERAL SENTIMENT WITHIN PLP. ON THE
OTHER HAND RUMORS OF DISAGREEMENT WITHIN PLP AND OF PINDLING'S
THREAT TO RESIGN MAKE ONE SUSPICIOUS OF THE LARGE NUMBER
OF ABSENTEES ON THE GOVERNMENT SIDE AT THE TIME OF THE
VOTE. IT MAY BE ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE LACKADAISICAL WAY

BAHAMIANS OPERATE. STILL, IF AS SUGGESTED IN PARA 3 PINDLING'S
ENTRANCE WAS CAREFULLY TIME TO GET A QUICK VOTE, ONE WOULD
HAVE THOUGHT EQUAL PREPARATION WOULD HAVE GONE INTO
HAVING THE FULL PARTY PRESENT -- UNLESS OF COURSE IT WAS A CONVENIENT
WAY FOR SOME GOVERNMENT MEMBERS TO AVOID AN OPEN SPLIT.
EMBASSY HAD EXPECTED VOTE OF CONFIDENCE TO BE DEFEATED SO
RESULT IS NO SURPRISE. THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH VOTE WAS
TAKEN IS NEVERTHELESS INTERESTING AND WE WILL OBSERVE
FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST.

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